

VERO BEACH RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Wednesday, July 29, 2015 – 3:00 p.m.

City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida

PRESENT: Chairman, Richard Yemm; Vice Chairman, Bobbi Burdick (arrived at 3:11 p.m.); Members: Greg Holtan, Judy Jones, Sue Dinunno, and Alternate members Angie Schepers and Christina Pierce **Also Present:** Recreation Director, Rob Slezak, Assistant Recreation Director, Patty Howard; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called today's meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and the Senior Administrative Assistant performed the roll call.

Mr. Yemm introduced and welcomed Ms. Christina Pierce, the Recreation Commissions new Alternate member.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) May 12, 2015

Mrs. Dinunno made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2015 Recreation Commission meeting. Mr. Yemm seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. CITIZEN INPUT

None

4. WORKSHOP DISCUSSION ITEM

A) Power Plant Land Usage

Mr. Yemm said that he put together a Power Point presentation (on file in the City Clerk's office). He stated that they will probably hold three (3) public workshops to discuss the potential usage of land that is currently occupied by the City Power Plant. He said he was told that they will not get access to the land as quickly as they anticipated. He suggested that they schedule the next public workshop in November and another one in the spring. There is no urgency right now, but they are getting the process moving. This process was initiated by Mr. Paul Dritenbas, Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) Commissioner, who made a presentation to City Council on May 5, 2015. Mr. Dritenbas shared what he thought about the land and what opportunities there were to use FIND money. He reported that the Power Plant property is approximately 17.9 acres and tied in with this piece of land is the potential use of the Water and Sewer Plant property, but it may not be available for five (5) to ten years. He understands that some of the Power Plant land will become available next year, but it will just be small pieces that are not being used. He believes that the property along the water will be available first and as they start decommissioning the Power Plant over the next two (2) to three (3) years they will release more of the property.

Mr. Jim O'Connor, City Manager, explained that at one time they discussed moving the substation, which is on the Power Plant land to another location nearby. They did a Phase One Optimization Study to look at the Power Plant property to determine the best use for the land. The highest and best use is commercial/residential mixed-use type, but unfortunately they would be about five million dollars in the hole by the time they took down the Plant and prepared the land for that type of use. On the other hand they can designate it as recreational use, which would not disturb the ground. There would still be the cost factor of taking the Plant down. They have the issue with the substation, but with 17 acres he believes they could leave the substation on that site and still use the property for recreational activities. It would save the City a considerable amount of money if they did not have to move the substation.

Mr. Yemm asked how soon can they start decommissioning the Power Plant.

Mr. O'Connor explained that the City would first have to accept that the substation would remain located on the Power Plant property. The City has already made a request for transmission to know how they would import power if they decommission the Power Plant and take it off line. They have taken steps in that direction by taking two (2) of the five (5) units off line. They have also submitted a Request for Proposal (RFP) for purchase power agreements. If they can get the transmission capability they would install a transformer at a substation and upgrade other transformers. They do not believe there is much power line construction, so hopefully by sometime in 2016 they will have the transmission and power supply contract in place, which would allow them to decommission the Power Plant for generating power. The Power Plant building would need to remain standing because part of the substation is inside the building, but they can abandon the fuel tanks in the back and some of the other areas.

Mrs. Dinunno said if they parcel out the property a little bit at a time it precludes the opportunity to put in a whole development at one time.

Mr. Yemm suggested that they could do waterfront development first and then come back with other projects.

Mr. O'Connor stated that the water is rather shallow for any boating activity along the front that goes directly into the Indian River Lagoon. Even where the barges used to come in has silted over. However, the canal on the south side will allow for deeper water vessels.

Mr. Yemm asked if they could start developing the waterfront when that parcel is available.

Mr. O'Connor replied yes. They could plan activities that would take advantage of the beauty of the Indian River Lagoon, but it could not be a Marina unless the water was dredged.

Mr. Yemm displayed some information from Mr. Dritenbas showing that there is money available from the FIND Waterway Assistance Program grants for dredging.

Mr. O'Connor said he is aware of that, but it is a 50/50 match on the design, so they would need to be ready to present a design at that time. Using FIND grants is good, but it still requires 50 percent of matching funds. They will need an adopted Land Use Plan in order to make an application.

Mr. Yemm said he understands that after they hold the public workshops it will go back to the City Council for them to do a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a land planner.

Mr. O'Connor explained that the land planner is not covered under the FIND grant.

Mrs. Dinunno asked if this meeting was advertized, because there does not seem to be a lot interest from the public.

Mrs. Tammy Vock, City Clerk, reported that the meeting was advertised in the front section of a Sunday newspaper.

Mr. Jay Kramer, City Council member, stated that during processes like these people tend to wait and at the last moment they speak up with their ideas. We are trying to get the word out about this opportunity and they want the public's input. Over the past several years this property has been the subject of a lot of attention, but now that it has become open to other options he would have expected more people to offer suggestions.

Mrs. Dinunno said that maybe if they would have publicized the meeting instead of placing an advertisement, it may have generated some stories in other publications to spark some interest.

Mr. Kramer said the goal is to get the public involved, so advertising is probably what they need to do.

Mrs. Schepers said that people may be waiting to hear what the City is thinking about before they give their ideas.

Mr. Yemm suggested that they state in the next advertisement the suggested uses. That may push people to participate knowing what direction it is headed.

Mr. Kramer recommended that they put this subject on the Marine Commission agenda and ask for their opinion.

Mr. Yemm said that more than half of the suggestions from the June Recreation Commission meeting were water related. He thinks they can split the land as long as it is for Recreational use. Perhaps the top quarter of the property along the water could be used for a Marina and restaurant that was suggested. It has been expressed that whatever they put in this area it needs to be something that will generate money and pay for itself. If they develop a water park they could outsource the operation with the intent of that business paying for the development.

Mr. Kramer said that he is not sure if they can contract with a private business that provides recreation where the proceeds benefit the Recreation Department.

Mrs. Dinunno stated that it would be like the Dog Park. The City leased the land to them, but the organization chose how to spend their money to improve it.

Mr. O'Connor stated that the City is a horrible landlord and they do not have a very good track record. He is not fond of floating a bond and expecting a lease to pay for it, because he knows how that will turn out.

Mr. Yemm asked if anyone looked into the Sailfish Splash Water Park in Martin County.

Mr. Slezak stated that he knows it is a revenue generator, but he is not sure how it is operated. It is a large facility. With what is going on with the Power Plant land, he believes it is going to be quite a while before they can use the entire 17 acres.

Mr. Yemm said the suggestion of an Amphitheater would be more of an open park concept and only used on occasion. They could charge for the events, but it will not generate as much income as a water park.

Mr. O'Connor explained that one of the issues with a water park is that they have to dig down in the ground and that would involve doing a couple of phases of environmental testing. A good thing is that they have not seen any leaching from the test wells and they have not had any environmental issues.

Mr. Holtan asked if they really need five (5) to six (6) years to decide what is going to take place with the property, or could they do it in a shorter amount of time.

Mr. O'Connor said that he is hoping that in early 2016 they will have a power supply contract in place, which will allow them to abandon the Power Plant and they can take all of the generation facilities off line. Except for the substation and the empty building they are free to figure out what to do with the property. The City has already done a phase one study with a consultant in regards to the demolition of the building. Once they determine a use for the property that will determine how much clean up needs to take place.

Mrs. Dinunno asked what happened with the old Post Office property across the street from the Power Plant.

Mr. O'Connor explained that it got entangled in the contract with FPL. The City assumed that nobody wanted the substation to remain on the Power Plant property, so the Post Office property was dedicated as the new sight for the substation.

Mrs. Dinunno said if they keep the Post Office property could it possibly be incorporated in with what they will do with the Power Plant land. She was not thinking of using it for recreational use, but more for businesses who would benefit from the recreational activity which is located on the Power Plant property.

Mr. O'Connor said it is possible that they would sell the Post Office property and he has already been contacted by a couple of developers who are interested in it. One proposal was for some small specialty shops and the other one was from Cumberland Farms.

Mr. Yemm asked if anyone had any more suggestions to add to the list of uses for the land.

Mr. O'Connor said he wishes them the best of luck and hopes that they can turn it into a money producer. The property has a waterfront and water attracts everyone, so they just need to decide what type of activity will work best.

Mr. Yemm said he understands that the Marina is running at full capacity during season.

Mr. O'Connor stated that if it was not for the debt service the Marina would be doing well, but it is a marginal break even business.

Mr. Yemm suggested that they take this opportunity to expand the Marina and take advantage of all the waterfront possibilities.

Mr. O'Connor said that the Marine Commission should also have some input on this property.

Mr. Yemm asked if there is a need for additional boat ramps.

Mr. O'Connor replied yes, especially on the east side of the lagoon, because they are lacking boat ramps there. He said that the boat ramps at MacWilliams Park and Riverside Park are well used.

Mr. Yemm asked if they could get FIND money to build a pier.

Mr. O'Connor replied yes, because that is a water activity.

Mr. Yemm stated that Mr. Dritenbas also made mention of several other grants in his presentation.

Mr. Slezak reported that he found out that the Sail Fish Water Park houses 3,000 parking spaces. It is a 2-acre water park facility, but it requires 3,000 parking spots including 20 bus areas. If they put a water park on the Power Plant property they may have enough room for 500 to 700 parking spots.

Mr. Kramer said it would be nice to have an official idea to move forward.

Mr. Yemm stated that next time they advertise the workshop they will stress a greater sense of urgency in seeking suggestions and feedback. He asked if they should get input from the Marine Commission.

Mr. O'Connor replied yes. If they are going to talk about a Marina type activity, then the Marine Commission should be part of the conversation before they determine the primary use of the property. They need to make sure that the Marina is interested in expanding.

5. NEW BUSINESS

None

6. OLD BUSINESS

None

7. RECREATION DIRECTOR'S MATTERS

A) 41st Annual Aerial Antics Circus

Mr. Slezak announced that the Aerial Antic Circus performances will take place on August 6, 7, and 8, 2015 at Saint Edward's School. Each show will be at 7:00 p.m. and they will last approximately an hour and a half.

B) Recap of July 4th Event

Mr. Slezak reported that the July 4th event went very well. He gave special thanks to the sponsors and all the volunteers who helped make it successful.

Mr. Slezak announced that Ms. Jones is sponsoring the Jr. Staff recognition get together on Friday, July 31, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. at the Community Center.

8. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

None

9. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mrs. Dinunno announced that the mural on the Bethel Creek House is finished and the dedication will be on August 19, 2015 at 9:30 a.m.

Ms. Jones asked for an update on the Charles Park addition.

Mr. Slezak reported that the Charles Park addition has been placed in the 2019/2020 budget.

A) Next Meeting Date – August 11, 2015

The next Recreation Commission meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2015 at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Yemm stated that the Rowing Club is tentatively scheduled to attend the August meeting. He said that he will touch base with the Chairman of the Marine Commission about the use of the Power Plant property. He suggested that the Recreation Commission separate themselves from the Marine Commission on the usage of the property.

Mr. O'Connor said that they need to keep in mind the total scope of the property, because he assumes there will be multiple uses of that sight.

Mr. Yemm said that perhaps he will go to the next Marine Commission meeting to discuss the ideas that have been presented.

10. Adjournment

Today's meeting adjourned at 3:57 p.m.

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AGENDA

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - A) May 12, 2015**
- 3. CITIZEN INPUT**
- 4. WORKSHOP DISCUSSION ITEM**
 - A) Power Plant Land Usage**
- 5. NEW BUSINESS**
- 6. OLD BUSINESS**
- 7. RECREATION DIRECTOR'S MATTERS**
 - A) 41st Annual Aerial Antics Circus**
 - B) Recap of July 4th Event**
- 8. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**
- 9. MEMBER'S MATTERS**
 - A) Next Meeting Date – August 11, 2015**
- 10. ADJOURNMENT**

This is a Public Meeting. Should any interested party seek to appeal any decision made by the Commission with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings and that, for such purpose, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Anyone who needs a special accommodation for this meeting may contact the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator at 978-4920 at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.